

Docket No.: YOR920010262US2

IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims as indicated below.

1. (Cancelled)

2. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 4, further comprising the step of allowing said software component to access an external environment only through said output port.

3. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 4, further comprising the step of allowing a client to access said software component only through said input port.

4. (Currently Amended) A method for programming a software component, said method comprising the steps of:

defining properties of said software component, including at least one input port and at least one output port; and

providing a software mechanism for instantiating said software component; and

utilizing an attach command to attach at least one of said at least one input port to a class.

5. (Cancelled)

6. (Cancelled)

7. (Cancelled)

8. (Withdrawn) A method for posting a message to a group, said method comprising the steps of:

defining properties of at least one software component, including at least one input port and at least one output port;

Docket No.: YOR920010262US2

registering said software component with said group; and  
providing a message posted to said group to each of the software  
components that have registered with said group.

5 9. (Cancelled)

10 10. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 9 12, wherein said  
processor is further configured to allow said software component to access an external  
environment only through said output port.

11. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 9 12, wherein said  
processor is further configured to allow a client to access said software component only  
through said input port.

15 12. (Currently Amended) A system for programming a software  
component, said system comprising:

a memory that stores computer-readable code; and  
a processor operatively coupled to said memory, said processor configured  
to implement said computer-readable code, said computer-readable code configured to:

20 define properties of said software component, including at least one input  
port and at least one output port; and

provide a software mechanism for instantiating said software component;  
and

25 utilize an attach command to attach at least one of said at least one input  
port to a class.

13. (Cancelled)

30 14. (Cancelled)

15. (Cancelled)

Docket No.: YOR920010262US2

16. (Withdrawn) A system for posting a message to a group, said system comprising:

- 5 a memory that stores computer-readable code; and  
a processor operatively coupled to said memory, said processor configured to implement said computer-readable code, said computer-readable code configured to:  
define properties of at least one software component, including at least one input port and at least one output port;  
register said software component with said group; and  
10 provide a message posted to said group to each of the software components that have registered with said group.

17. (Cancelled)

15 18. (Currently Amended) An article of manufacture for programming a software component, said system comprising:

- a computer readable medium having computer readable code means embodied thereon, said computer readable program code means comprising:  
a step to define properties of said software component, including at least  
20 one input port and at least one output port; and  
a step to provide a software mechanism for instantiating said software component; and  
a step to utilize an attach command to attach at least one of said at least one input port to a class.

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19. (Cancelled)

20. (Withdrawn) An article of manufacture for posting a message to a group, said system comprising:

- 30 a computer readable medium having computer readable code means embodied thereon, said computer readable program code means comprising:

Docket No.: YOR920010262US2

a step to define properties of at least one software component, including at least one input port and at least one output port;

a step to register said software component with said group; and

a step to provide a message posted to said group to each of the software

5 components that have registered with said group.